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**PHILIPPINES**

## SUCCESS STORY

### Combating Illegal Logging through Forest Land Use Planning



*A community gathering in preparation for a forest land use plan (FLUP) in Kalamansig.*

Kalamansig in Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao has population of 48,000 people, composed of Muslims, migrants and indigenous peoples. They had serious reasons to worry about. Decades of unsound practices and illegal tree cutting have taken toll on their livelihoods and food security. About half of Kalamansig's residents have been engaged in illegal logging inside Kalamansig's 40,000-hectares (ha) of forestlands. A significant portion of it was converted to farmlands. These activities then led to the sudden drop of Kalamansig's forest cover from 36,705 ha in 1987 to only 10,000 ha in 2003. Due to the clearing of forestlands 2,000 lowland residents have become victims to flashfloods each year during the rainy season. The recurring flashfloods destroyed \$277,778 worth of infrastructure and crops year by year. On dry season, lowland farmlands complain about shortage in irrigation water. The people eventually realized to get their acts together before all is lost to droughts and flashfloods.

The Kalamansig local government officials attempted many times in the past to address the problems. They felt helpless and inadequate until they decided to work with the USAID-assisted Philippine Environmental Governance (EcoGov) Project and the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to implement a transparent and participatory forest land use planning process. This approach provided the basis for the issuance of appropriate tenure rights to legitimate users and for identifying sustainable land use for conservation and development through co-management scheme between the local government and the DENR.

The Kalamansig local government responded by creating a multi-sectoral forest land use planning (FLUP) group that managed the process of intense consultations, orientation, training, conflict-management and negotiation between the local government and its constituents. They agreed on a common action plan which they themselves implemented immediately such as trainings on law enforcement where as a result they successfully apprehended illegal loggers in the area.

The local government with the DENR signed a co-management agreement to manage a 1,000 hectares of community watershed to support domestic water supply. Kalamansig's local government has also set aside 3,956 ha of forest lands that it would develop into a communal forest to supply the town's needs for wood. The local government set aside almost \$18,000 to finance other forest-related activities and planned to allocate more than \$148,000 for the next ten years despite their limited budget. The local government decided to set up a Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) to monitor and implement its forest management program. Settlers in the forest areas formed an association to implement resource management arrangements through tenure and users rights. This increased further the incentives for forest protection activities to flourish. To date, the MENRO staff noted that there are no reports of timber cutting activities. He narrates, "This report shows that our efforts to protect our forests are paying off. We are preventing the occurrence of destructive forest practices. And we have our people and the EcoGov Project to thank for it."